



Leaves of Absence Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish definitions for leaves of absence such as illness or injury, pregnancy, parental, family responsibility, bereavement, compassionate care, jury duty, and reservists; and to define guidelines and conditions under which employees can apply for such leaves. Acres is committed to being fair and understanding towards our employees during a leave of absence.

Scope:

This policy applies to all employees of Acres.

Policy:

Illness or Injury Leave

After 90 days of employment, employees can take up to 5 paid days and 3 unpaid days of job-protected leave in their employment year, based on their starting date. Illness or injury leave does not carry over from year to year if it is not used during the employment year (based on the start date of employment and not calendar year).

If an employee can't work due to illness or injury, they should notify their employer (Supervisor) as soon as they can. The employee is entitled to illness or injury leave when needed and the employer has the right to ask for reasonably sufficient proof of the need for the leave. Reasonably sufficient proof helps to establish that the employee's absence is due to illness or injury.

Medical Appointments

Employees are encouraged to book medical appointments outside of working hours, however, in the event a medical appointment is not able to be booked outside of working hours, employees will be granted unpaid time away to attend to the medical appointment. Employees are encouraged to supply their supervisors with 2 weeks' notice when possible.

Pregnancy Leave

A pregnant employee is entitled to up to 17 consecutive weeks of unpaid pregnancy leave. This leave may start no earlier than 11 weeks before the expected birth date and must end no earlier than six weeks after the birth date unless the employee requests a shorter period.

If pregnancy leave is not requested until after the birth of a child or after termination of the pregnancy, the employee is entitled to up to six consecutive weeks of leave beginning on the date of birth or termination date.

An initial period of leave may be extended up to six consecutive weeks if an employee is unable to return to work for reasons relating to the birth or termination of a pregnancy.

A request to return from leave earlier than six weeks after the birth must be made in writing at least one week before the proposed return date.

An employer may require an employee to provide a doctor's certificate in support of a request for leave or a leave extension.

Parental Leave

Employees can take up to 62 weeks of unpaid parental leave. Both parents can take one full period of parental leave.

Parental leave can begin at any time within 78 weeks of a baby being born or a child being placed. It can be extended by up to 5 weeks if the child needs more care due to a physical, psychological, or emotional condition.

An employer may ask for proof that an employee is entitled to parental leave or an extension of parental leave – for example, they can ask for a certificate from a doctor or nurse practitioner.

Pregnant employees can take maternity leave and parental leave. A pregnant employee can take up to 61 weeks of unpaid parental leave after their maternity leave:

- 17 weeks of unpaid maternity leave

PLUS

- Up to 61 weeks of unpaid parental leave

For a total of 78 weeks (about 18 months)

Parental leave must begin immediately after maternity leave ends unless the employee and employer agree to a different date.

Family Responsibility Leave

An employee is entitled to up to five days of unpaid leave in each employment year (based on the start date of employment and not calendar year) to meet responsibilities related to the care, health or education of any member of the employee's immediate family.

Family Responsibility Leave does not accumulate from year to year.

Bereavement Leave

An employee is entitled to up to three days of unpaid leave on the death of a member of the employee's immediate family. * These days do not have to be consecutive or start on the date of death.

*"Immediate family" means the spouse, child, parent, guardian, sibling, grandchild or grandparent of an employee; and any person who lives with the employee as a member of the employee's family.

Compassionate Care Leave

An employee can take up to eight weeks of unpaid leave within a 26-week period to care for or support a gravely ill family member.

The employee must obtain a medical certificate which states that the family member is gravely ill with a significant risk of death within 26 weeks.

"Family member" means someone who is:

- in relation to an employee: a member of an employee's immediate family*;
- an employee's step-sibling, aunt or uncle, niece or nephew;
- a current or former foster parent, foster child, ward or guardian; or
- the spouse of an employee's sibling or step-sibling, child or step-child, grandparent, grandchild, aunt or uncle, niece or nephew, current or former foster child or guardian.
- in relation to an employee's spouse: a parent or step-parent, sibling or step-sibling, child, grandparent, grandchild, aunt or uncle, niece or nephew, current or former foster parent, or current or former ward; and
- anyone who is considered to be like a close relative regardless of whether or not they are related by blood, adoption, marriage or common law partnership.

Jury Duty

An employee who is required to attend court as a juror is considered to be on unpaid leave for the period of the jury duty.

Reservists' Leave

An employee who is a reservist is entitled to unpaid leave if the employee is deployed to a Canadian Forces operation outside Canada, is engaged in pre- or post-deployment activities either inside or outside Canada or is deployed inside Canada to assist in dealing with an emergency or its aftermath.

An employee who is a reservist is entitled to 20 days unpaid leave in a calendar year if the employee is engaged in Canadian Forces training activities or travelling to or from training. If an employee participates in more than one training activity, the entitlement is 20 days in total.

The employee must give the employer four weeks' written notice of the date the leave will begin and end. However, in the case of a deployment, if the employee receives less than four weeks' notice, he or she must give the employer as much notice as is practicable.

If a deployment is extended, the employee must give the employer notice four weeks before the date the leave was to have ended, or as soon as practicable. If a training activity is extended, the employee must give the employer notice four weeks before the date the leave was to have ended.

If the employee proposes to return to work earlier than originally specified, the employee must give the employer at least one week's notice.

Request for Leave

Employees are encouraged to inform Human Resources in writing of the date they will be going on a leave well in advance to avoid miscommunication and allow for coverage.

Employment Considered Continuous

Excluding sick/medical leave, if an employee is on any of the leaves referred to above or is on jury duty, employment is considered continuous for the purposes of calculating annual vacation and termination entitlements.

The employee is entitled to all increases in wages and benefits that the employee would have received if not on leave.

Benefits While on Leave

Under British Columbia's Employment Standards, the responsibility for the cost of benefits during a leave of absence depends on the nature of the leave:

- For Pregnancy and Parental Leave: Acres will continue benefits coverage, and the employee is responsible for their portion of the premium contributions (LTD premiums) unless the employee elects not to continue coverage.
- For Illness, Injury, Temporary Layoffs, Compassionate Care, Family Responsibility, Bereavement, Jury Duty, and Reservists' Leave: Acres will continue benefits coverage, and the employee is responsible for paying their share of the benefit premiums (LTD premiums) unless the employee chooses to opt out of the benefit plan during the leave. The employer is required to make reasonable efforts to continue benefit plans during these leaves.
- For Extended Leave: Acres will continue benefit coverage for up to a period of 12 months. The employee will be required to pay for their share of premiums.

Return to Work

When the leave or jury duty ends, an employee must be returned to his or her former position or to a comparable position. It is Human Resources' responsibility to contact the employee to make arrangements for the employee's return to work.